

HR Weekly Podcast
May 16, 2008

Today is May 16, 2008, and welcome to the HR weekly podcast from the State Office of Human Resources. This week's topic discusses the importance of onboarding and shares tools used in successful onboarding programs.

Studies show that a majority of new hires decide whether or not to stay with an organization within the first six months of employment. According to the United States Department of Labor, more than 25 percent of the United States workforce has been at the same company for less than one year. These numbers show that new hires are extremely vulnerable to leave organizations within a year or less of employment in higher rates than in previous years.

One reason employers are experiencing high turnover among new hires is linked to a failed or non-existent onboarding process. Employees tend to leave an organization because they failed to become engaged in the organization and establish relationships with co-workers during their initial months of employment.

Successful employers use updated tools and technology to engage and retain new employees. The most effective tool used by many organizations is onboarding. Onboarding is a much more comprehensive approach that starts before orientation and extends well beyond the first few days. Onboarding provides a more strategic plan for employee success than orientation alone and can last from three months to two years.

Onboarding is the orientation and mainstreaming process that integrates and engages employees to their new work environment. The purpose of onboarding is to ensure that employees have a great first impression, feel welcomed and valued, begin to build long-term relationships, become productive faster, and remain loyal to the organization.

Employers can begin building an effective onboarding program by evaluating their current onboarding or orientation process. To customize an onboarding program that fits an organization, employers should think about the following questions:

- How fast do new employees become productive?
- Does the organization proactively encourage building relationships with newly hired employees?
- How many hires per month are there?
- What is the turnover rate?
- How long does the current onboarding process last?
- How is onboarding effectiveness measured?

Ensuring that managers are involved in the onboarding process is crucial in a successful onboarding program. The relationship employees have with their managers is one of the most important in an employee's work life. Managers should take time to discuss issues with new employees, give feedback, and address any concerns that their new employees may have.

Assigning a mentor to a new employee during the first 90 days of employment is another tool used in onboarding programs. A mentor's role is to offer insight to the employee regarding the organization's culture and structure and assist the employee with training and education. Mentors should be

individuals that exemplify the type of behavior and productivity that an organization desires from all of its employees.

Using technology is another effective onboarding tool, especially during the first weeks of employment. Often new hires receive a large amount of information on the first day of employment and often feel overwhelmed or drained by the end of the day. To help prevent this feeling, organizations can offer the new hire paperwork online prior to the first day of employment. Providing an online handbook, insurance information, retirement information, welcome presentation, map, and directions to restrooms or eating facilities are a few examples of how employers can prevent "information over-load" during the first few days of employment.

The onboarding process is a key factor in determining the loyalty and productivity of new employees. Having an effective onboarding process is a great investment and, if implemented effectively, will increase retention, improve customer satisfaction, and improve organizational brand.

If you would like more information on onboarding, please visit the OHR website at ohr.sc.gov or contact your HR consultant at 737-0900.

Thank You.